

The McClellanville Planning Commission met on the above-noted date and time. Notice of the meeting was published in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. Planning Commission members present were Ginny Prevost (Chair), Oliver Thames, Scott Youngblood, Dan Fifis and Adam Freeze. Others present included: Michelle McClellan and Kathryn Basha.

Commissioner Prevost opened the meeting and asked the Commissioners to review the minutes of the June 23, 2025, meeting. Commissioner Fifis moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thames and carried with an “aye” vote by all Commission members. The Commissioners then reviewed draft minutes of August 25, 2025, joint public hearing. Commissioner Freeze moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Youngblood and carried with an “aye” vote by all Commission members.

Ms. Basha reported that Town Council reviewed the draft zoning ordinance amendments during their meeting on September 2, 2025. Following their review, Council referred the following provisions back to the Commission for additional review and recommendations.

Section 3.5.2(a)(3) – Bed and Breakfasts –Because they are considered a Home Occupation, Bed and Breakfast Homes must retain 50% of the floor area for guest rooms as the owner’s residential quarters. At Council’s second reading, Councilman Bates inquired about the rationale behind the requirement that 50% of the guest room floor area being reserved for the owner's residential quarters and made a motion to send Section 3.5.2 back to the PC for review, suggesting this be reduced to 33% of the guest room area.

Staff researched the effect that change may have. If more than 50% of a property is used for commercial purposes, it can trigger a reclassification from residential to commercial use, which often leads to a change in how the property is taxed.

Ms. Basha acknowledged that the way the ordinance is currently written referring to floor area of guest rooms is confusing and made a recommendation that the ordinance be clarified to say that the owner’s private quarters and common areas must constitute at least 50% of the floor area of the premises. After discussion, the Commissioner Thames made a motion to send the revised wording back to Council for clarification. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fifis and carried with an “aye” vote by all Commission members.

The Commissioners reviewed Section 3.5.5 regarding the storage of vehicles and equipment. The Commission previously recommended a revision to the ordinance so that commercial vehicles and equipment

must also be stored to the side or behind the main building and screened (as is the current requirement for recreational equipment and inoperable vehicles). Ms. Basha noted that Councilman Scott believed this requirement had been addressed before and raised concerns about its potential impact on local commercial fishermen. After considering the possible effects on the community, the Commissioners decided to retain the existing ordinance without changes.

The Commissioners reviewed Section 5.4.4 – Permitted Uses in the Highway Commercial District – an Amendment proposed to allow contractor offices as a permitted use in the Highway Commercial district. Prior to the public hearing, it was noted by a member of the public that two contracting service establishments already exist within the district. Currently a contractor’s office with accessory enclosed storage is permitted in Marine Commercial and Rural Activities districts. Outdoor storage - accessory to permitted uses - is allowed subject to a set of conditions in the Highway Commercial District under Section 5.4.5(c). Council did not object to this newly proposed amendment.

The Commissioners agreed that contractor’s offices should be included under Section 5.4.5 (c). Commissioner Fifis noted that Contractor’s offices should also be defined in Article XIV, the definition section of the ordinance. Commissioner Freeze made a motion to add contractor’s offices to section 5.4.5(c). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thames and carried with an “aye” vote by all Commission members.

Next, the Commission discussed Section 7.1 – Screening and Buffers Applicability. The proposed amendment requires a buffer and impervious setback for new subdivisions and/or construction abutting the SCDES delineated Critical Areas and sets standards for said buffers with the addition of Section 7.2.3. Ms. Basha noted that staff did considerable research on what buffers are required by neighboring jurisdictions pre-COVID and is verifying whether any have been eliminated.

Commissioner Thames expressed concerns about the proposed amendment, describing it as overly restrictive. He noted that the Town has managed hurricanes and flooding effectively for many years without such measures and questioned its necessity. Commissioner Prevost responded by highlighting that, unlike in the past, there is now greater awareness of the impact of human-related runoff and emphasized the importance of adopting best practices to minimize environmental damage in the Cape Romain refuge.

Ms. Basha noted that the draft buffer standards had been updated based on public comment at the public hearing, to include: reducing the required canopy trees to match the current canopy coverage requirement of the tree ordinance (from 1/500sf to 1/2000 sf), requiring new plantings to be native species, allowing for protected trees to be selectively trimmed and landscaped, allowing grasses and shrubs to be pruned to a lower height of 2’, capping the percentage of the lot that could be within the critical area buffer, and providing authorizations for administrative reductions of the impervious setback as well as reduction of the critical area buffer depth clarifying that greater reductions could be considered by the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Following an extended discussion, Commissioner Fifis moved to forward the Critical Area Buffer Amendments to Council for adoption. Commissioner Youngblood seconded. Prevost, Youngblood, Fifis, and Freeze voted in favor; Thames opposed. The motion passed.

Commissioner Prevost asked about the status of the Dollar general site repairs and improvements. Ms. McClellan stated that the store was possibly being sold. Commissioner Prevost asked if the repairs and improvements that the Town had required could be transferred to the new owner. Ms. Basha said she would have to check on the legal status and whether a new violation notice would need to be issued.

There being no further business, Ms. Prevost asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Thames so moved, seconded by Mr. Youngblood. The motion carried an “aye” unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle McClellan

Michelle McClellan
Town Clerk